STATUS OF WOMEN

Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Conseil consultatif sur la condition féminine de la Nouvelle-Écosse

An agency of the Province of Nova Scotia

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Plan of Action: 2001-2002

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Mandate and Mission

2.1 Mandate

The mandate of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women derives from the statute establishing the Council: the **Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act.** Section 4 (1) requires the council to advise the Minister, and to bring forward the concerns of women in Nova Scotia. Section 4 (2) defines the powers of the Council, which may:

- receive and hear petitions and suggestions concerning the status of women;
- undertake and recommend research on matters relevant to the status of women;
- recommend and participate in programs concerning the status of women;
- propose legislation, policies and practices to promote equality of opportunity and status; and
- publish reports, studies and recommendations.

Mission

To advance equality, fairness and dignity for all women in Nova Scotia

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2.2 Goals

To increase the participation of women in all their diversity in decisions that affect their lives, families and communities, with particular emphasis on those who face discrimination because of race, age, language, class, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or various forms of family status.

To promote women's economic equality.

To reduce violence against women in communities, workplaces, and families.

To improve the health and well-being of women and their families.

2.3 Core Functions

2.3.1 Research and Policy Development

Advises Minister on concerns and priorities of women, and formulates strategies and options to address these. Conducts quantitative and qualitative research in consultation with community groups and government departments to ensure advice is a feasible, relevant, timely, and accurate guide to governmental action.

2.3.2 Information and Communications Services

Collects and disseminates information on women's issues to Minister, Council, staff, and other key stakeholders including media and the general public. Through a comprehensive communications strategy, informs and influences stakeholders about issues and concerns affecting women, about Council and government priorities, activities, accomplishments and opportunities for improvement in addressing women's issues.

2.3.3 Community Development - Rural Outreach and Community Liaison

Through Council members and the fieldwork program, brings forward concerns of women from across Nova Scotia, with particular attention to historically-disadvantaged groups. Partners with communities and agencies to advance equality for women in programs and services.

2.4 Priorities for 2001-2002

2.4.1 To increase the inclusion and participation of women in all their diversity in decisions that affect their lives, families, and communities, with particular emphasis on those who face discrimination because of race, age, language, class, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or various forms of family status.

- Maintain Council effectiveness through orientation program for new members, support of new Chair, media training for members, and adequate support for Council work

- Implement communications strategy focussed on the 25th Anniversary of the Nova Scotia Task Force on the Status of Women and the Advisory Council, and key dates and events throughout the year; i.e., International Women's Day, National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, Women's History Month, etc.
- Build on research findings on rural women in Nova Scotia to enhance their leadership in public affairs, through a series of workshops to define barriers and opportunities to women's participation in public life. Prepare and publish report on the workshop findings.
- Promote the inclusion of women's issues in all their diversity in government policy development and program design through:

  Coordinating Committee and two Field Teams of the Sustainable Communities Initiative

  Implementation of a Roundtable on Women's Income Security and Employment support, using FPT Status of Women

Minister's publication on women's income security as a framework

Liaison with women's groups who are working to support common objectives in women's equality

Preparation and presentation of briefs on major initiatives and legislative changes; e.g., federal Divorce Act and family law matters

Advise the Department of Justice in the development of tools to insure fairness and safety for women in the Family Court

2.4.2 To promote women's economic equality.

Publish 4 more volumes in *Women in Nova Scotia: A Statistical Series* to provide updated statistical information on women's education, training, workforce participation, occupation and income in the wider context of family responsibilities throughout the life cycle.
Work with organizations such as: Women in CED Network, Women's FishNet, women's business groups, WITT-NS, Association of Nova Scotia Women for Education and Research in Science, Techsploration, Hypatia, Skills-NS, Nova Scotia Community College, Department of Education, Girl Guides of Canada, literacy organizations, etc. to foster economic equality and life-long learning in all occupational areas, particularly in fields where women remain under-represented

2.4.3 To reduce violence against women in communities, workplaces and families.

Develop and publish 3rd edition of *Making Changes: A Handbook for Abused Women*

Support the appropriate use of restorative justice in sexual assault and domestic violence cases, including explicit recognition of victims' rights and interests through policy and protocol development.
Collaborate with concerned community groups to limit the use of conditional sentencing in cases of sexual assault and domestic violence.

2.4.4 To improve the health and well-being of women and their families.

Implement the Healthy Balance research program in partnership with the Maritime Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, Dalhousie University and the IWK-Grace Health Centre. This is a five-year program of research which has been funded for $1.7 million by the Canadian Institutes for Health Research to investigate the health impacts of care giving roles on Nova Scotians, with particular attention to effective supports to caregivers throughout the life cycle.